

CLAIM AMENDMENTS:**Claims 1 to 28 (cancelled)**

29. (previously presented) A method for the manufacture of brushes having a plastic bristle carrier and a bristle stock of individual or bundled plastic bristles fastened thereto, the method comprising the steps of:
 - a) melting fastening-sided ends of the bristles or bundles into thickenings;
 - b) shaping and displacing plastic material of at least a portion of said thickenings in a mold to create at least a partial support structure web connecting together adjacent thickenings; and
 - c) embedding said thickenings and said web through a short length in plastics material of said bristle carrier.
30. (previously presented) The method of claim 29, wherein said web defines plastic-free openings between said thickenings.
31. (previously presented) The method of claim 29, wherein a bristle side of said thickenings abuts a support and plastics material displacement of said thickenings during shaping for forming said support structure web is controlled by a closing pressure of said mold against said support.

32. (previously presented) The method of claim 29, wherein plastics material displacement from said thickenings during shaping for forming said support structure web is controlled by a length of bristles melted to form said thickenings.
33. (previously presented) The method of claim 29, wherein thickenings of more than two bristles or bristles bundles are shaped to a mutually connecting grid.
34. (previously presented) The method of claim 29, wherein step b) is performed with a time delay following step a), wherein said time delay being is selected such that said thickenings are still in a plastic state during step b).
35. (previously presented) The method of claim 29, wherein step b) is performed with a time delay following step a), said time delay being chosen such that said thickenings are still ductile during step b).
36. (previously presented) The method of claim 29, for the manufacture of toothbrushes or hygiene brushes, wherein for obtaining a desired flexibility of the bristle stock, a moment of inertia of said bristle carrier about a bending axis of the bristle stock and a modulus of elasticity of plastic of said bristle carrier are so selected that a flexibility of said bristle carrier alone exceeds a desired flexibility of the bristle stock, wherein a number of connections between individual bristles or bristle bundles and their effective moment of inertia about said bending axis, in conjunction

with a moment of inertia of said thickenings, is at least locally selected in such a way that said flexibility of said bristle carrier is reduced to a value desired for the bristle stock.

37. (previously presented) The method of claim 29, wherein plastics material displaced from said thickenings is shaped in said web to a cross-section whose effective moment of inertia is lower than that of said thickenings.
38. (previously presented) The method of claim 29, wherein at least a portion of said web has a moment of inertia which imparts hinging properties to said web portion.
39. (previously presented) A method for the manufacture of brushes having a plastic bristle carrier and a bristle stock of individual or bundled plastic bristles fastened thereto, the method comprising steps of:
 - a) melting fastening-sided ends of the bristles or bundles into thickenings;
 - b) joining a support structure web onto at least a portion of said thickenings to cover thickenings and to connect together adjacent thickenings; and
 - c) embedding said thickenings and said web through a short length in plastics material of said bristle carrier.
40. (previously presented) A method of claim 29, wherein step b) comprises shaping and displacing plastic material of a part of said

thickenings to create a part of a support structure web connecting together adjacent thickenings, and further comprising joining a remaining part of a support structure web onto a remaining part of said thickenings to cover all of remaining thickenings and to connect together adjacent remaining thickenings, prior to step c).

41. (previously presented) The method of claim 39, wherein said support structure web is joined to said thickenings by injection molding.
42. (previously presented) The method of claim 40, wherein said remaining part of said support structure web is joined to said remaining thickenings by injection molding.
43. (previously presented) An apparatus for performing the method of the claim 29, the apparatus comprising:

a mounting support having channels for receiving the bristles or bristle bundles of a complete bristle stock of a toothbrush; means for supplying the bristles or bristle bundles into said channels to a position in which their fastening-sided ends project past the mouths of said channels; means for melting said fastening-side ends; and a shaping device having a male die associated with each thickening for lateral displacement of plastics material of said thickenings and at least one shaping unit located between said male dies for shaping said displaced plastics material into

connections between said thickenings for forming said support structure web.

44. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 43, wherein said shaping device comprises at least one closing unit having structures projecting past and between said male dies, said closing unit for placement on said mounting support to form plastic-free spaces between said dies.
45. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 43, wherein at least the closing unit has structures in advance of said male dies and said shaping unit.
46. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 45, wherein said male dies and said shaping unit are mutually integral.
47. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 43, wherein said male dies and said shaping unit can be separately controlled.
48. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 43, wherein, at least in predetermined areas, a shaping face of said shaping unit has structures which are retracted relative to a shaping faces of said male dies.
49. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 44, wherein said closing unit, said male dies and said shaping unit are portions of a one-piece mold.

50. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 43, wherein said mounting support having said channels receiving the bristles or bristle bundles simultaneously serves as an abutment for said shaping device.
51. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 43, wherein said shaping device is at least zonally provided with a heating device.
52. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 43, wherein said mounting support with said channels receiving the bristles or bristle bundles simultaneously forms part of a mold for said bristle carrier and, during a filling of said mold, shapes said bristle carrier at a bristle configuration side thereof.
53. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 43, wherein the bristles or bristle bundles are displaceable in the mounting support in a direction of said thickenings to adjust said thickenings in a mold to a desired embedding depth in said bristle carrier.

54 to 61 (cancelled)